

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #2606/01 3531553
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 181553Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9536
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8672
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6032
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 9994
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7215
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4263
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0915
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4596
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 4331
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6026
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0565
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6877
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1657
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1557
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002606

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: COCHABAMBA CAMPESINOS OUTSIDE EVO'S CAMP

REF: LA PAZ 2604

Classified By: EcoPol Counselor Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: On December 15 Emboff met with Ruben Lopez and Gonzalo Quispe, leaders of the Federacion de Campesinos de Cochabamba (Cochabamba small-farmers federation.) Lopez and Quispe emphasized that they were aligned with the original CSUTCB (a national confederation of small-farmers) and not with the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) clone. The original CSUTCB is headed by Rufo Calle, a 2008 International Visitor, while the MAS clone CSUTCB is headed by Isaac Avalos. Quispe and Lopez echoed complaints we have heard from Calle and other associates of the original CSUTCB that the MAS clone has usurped the original organization's press-coverage and now receives all government and international support, leaving the original CSUTCB without support. Quispe reported that Cochabamba's "grassroots" social movements that did not support the MAS were rapidly cloned, leaving the department (state) with two campesino women's groups, two campesino federations, and various other duplicated organizations. End summary.

- - - - -
If You Can't Beat 'Em, Silence 'Em
- - - - -

¶2. (C) Lopez and Quispe described how they feel the MAS is stifling dissent in the politically divided department of Cochabamba. Both of them report having been followed and physically prevented from approaching the press at public events: "if there is a protest at the plaza, we try to speak to the press but the MASistas surround us and don't let us talk." They also described what they see as MAS repression of the local media, claiming that the MAS has an office that monitors the local television channels, and any local program seen as too critical of the government is shut down (they cited two locally popular programs whose presenters were removed from the programs after criticizing Morales.) Although some opposition-aligned media still call them for interviews, Lopez and Quispe lamented the fact that most press coverage now cites leaders of the MAS clones.

Still No Organized Opposition

¶3. (C) Although they have working relations with the other original regional campesino federations (under the umbrella of the original CSUTCB), they report that they lack the budget for regular meetings or exchanges of information. They also feel that the non-campesino opposition (civic committees, national opposition parties) is not sharing information with campesino groups: "We know the new constitution is a bad thing, and we want to campaign for the "No" vote, but we don't know what to focus on. What are the worst articles?" They have asked for opposition intellectuals to brief them on the draft constitution, but they worry that there is no way they can compete with the well-funded deluge of "Si" propaganda in the countryside.

¶4. (C) Their federation hopes for a campesino prefect if the new constitution passes and elections are held in December 2009. They do not feel that ex-Prefect Manfred Reyes Villa could be re-elected as prefect, and they worry that a plethora of opposition candidates--they said as many as ten have been suggested--will give the departmental election to the MAS candidate. They are also worried, however, about MAS machinations at the voting booths, describing how MAS leaders encouraged entire communities to vote for Evo during the August 10 recall referendum in "public votes" (enforced community voting without benefit of secret ballot). They complained that MAS party members were "teaching the communities to vote yes" without explaining any of the details of the draft constitution, taking advantage of illiterate country-dwellers who did not know what they were saying "Yes" to.

Poor Peasants Getting Poorer

¶5. (C) Despite central government rhetoric in favor of campesinos and the countryside, Lopez and Quispe said that the situation for their members has been getting worse, "particularly in agriculture." Whereas they felt that ex-Prefect Reyes Villa was trying to improve the situation for small-farmers, particularly through road construction, the MAS practice of giving money (often Venezuelan money) directly to mayors means that towns have improved plazas or schools, but roads in the countryside are not improved and nothing is provided to small farmers. Quispe described a mayorship in his area where the mayor has locked Venezuelan tractors in the municipal parking lot rather than provide them to small farmers aligned with Quispe's group (and therefore not aligned with the MAS.)

Comment

¶6. (C) Lopez and Quispe's complaints are familiar, echoing those of other groups that have been marginalized by the MAS. Their allegations of MAS pressure on the media are also not surprising, considering President Morales' current anti-media rhetoric (including saying that 90 percent of reporters are liars.) MAS influence in Cochabamba does seem to be stifling dissent: an Aymara rural leader canceled a meeting with Emboffs at the last minute, saying that he felt it wasn't "safe" to be seen with us. As the MAS presents its clones to the international press and donor organizations and as MAS pressure discourages indigenous and local leaders from meeting with us, the truth will be harder to discover.
URS